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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, March 21, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "The Home Dressmaker Shops for Dress Goods." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Those of us who are doing our own sewing this year, making spring clothes for ourselves and our families, want to buy fabrics that will wear well. In these thrifty times we need to make good investments when we buy dress goods. None of us have money or time to waste on poor materials that will soon wear out. So, when we go shopping, we need to know how to choose materials, how to tell a good buy when we see one and how to avoid poor selections.

The textile specialists have studied this matter of fabrics that last. They have given me some helpful hints for shoppers which I'm going to pass along to you.

In the first place, they suggest that when you go to the store to select any fabric, you look at the way it is constructed. The simpler the construction, the more durable the fabric is likely to be. Novelties in weaves, in kinds and sizes of yarns, and in combinations of different fibers are usually poor buys. A plain over-and-under-each-yarn kind of fabric, with yarns of equal size, both ways, is called a balanced cloth. Durable fabrics are constructed this way. If the yarns going one way in the fabric are heavier than those going the other way, the fine yarns are likely to wear through soon. Uneven yarns also break readily. Heavy places in yarns and heavy cords wear through the finer yarn quickly.

Yarns in a strong, well-made fabric are not easily pulled out of place. Pull the material between your hands and note the strength and the slippage of the yarns. Sleazy fabrics are not durable. When you make a dress of such fabrics, it is likely to pull out at the seams. Yarns that are not fastened firmly in the fabric or that "float" across a number of other yarns will catch and pull out easily. Test the material before you buy it. "Pick" at the yarns and pull them gently. Do they pull out or are they fastened well?

Now about this problem of buying bargain goods. Some fabrics are on bargain counters because they are "seconds." That means they are not perfect. Their flaw may be small or large, important or unimportant. A "second" offered at a lower price is worth buying if its flaws do not decrease the value of the fabric for your particular purpose. But examine bargains carefully with this in mind and be sure before you buy.

So much for general shopping hints. Now some suggestions about buying special kinds of goods. This year promises to be a big cotton goods year, if what the fashion magazines say is true. Cotton goods will be on sale in new colors, weaves and patterns. What are some of the points to remember about choosing cottons wisely?

In the first place, cottons must be washed. If they won't wash satisfactorily, they aren't worth buying. Look for a colorfast guarantee on the cotton material you are buying. If it has no such label, take home a sample and wash it as a test. Loosely woven cottons or those with loosely twisted yarns often shrink badly. Many cotton fabrics that have been preshrunk are now available both in the piece and in ready-made garments. A fabric with yarns that are crooked and look as if they had been pulled out of place when the fabric was finished may have been over-stretched. In that case you can expect this fabric to spring back to its original smaller size when washed. Many cotton materials are starched or "filled" to give them a good appearance when new. But too much starch or filling means that the fabric will be sleazy and thin after even the first washing. Try it out by rubbing a small piece between the fingers to see if much starch dust falls out.

If you are planning to make some silk dresses this spring, here are a few shopping hints to help you select silk wisely. The specialists explain that good silk fabrics can't be made at little cost. Cheap silks are sleazy or excessively weighted and won't last long. You can test the amount of metallic weighting in the goods very easily, by putting a match to it. When the fabric has burned, if you find left a large amount of ash shaped like the original material you will know that the fabric is heavily weighted. You can also tell somewhat by the "feel" of the goods. Heavily weighted silk feels harsh and metallic. Such silks are poor investments because they soon begin to split and tear easily. Heavily weighted silk decreases in strength even if it is merely stored. So if you are considering some bargain silk, better tear a little piece at the edge before you buy. The silk may have rotted just by lying on the shelf and that may be the reason the store is offering it at such low cost. Needless to say, that's a bargain that isn't a bargain. Spun silk, silk made by spinning short pieces of silk fiber into yarn, is used particularly in wash silks. Such fabrics cost less money and usually wear well.

So much for silks and cottons. Now a word or two about rayons. Harsh, stiff rayons are not so satisfactory as the soft, pliable fabrics. Many soft rayons do not wrinkle and are very useful and inexpensive. Avoid those with fibers which break off and pull out readily. Rayons, especially cheap knitted kind, are sometimes heavily weighted with substances which come out in the first washing. The fabric after washing is flimsy and disappointing.

Tomorrow, we'll discuss ways of cooking eggs, and we'll have a lenten menu featuring an inexpensive egg main dish.

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